

Anti-Slavery Office,
New York, 28 Nov., 1857.

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Dear Garrison,

I received, on Thanksgiving day, in a letter from W. J. Bowditch, information of my dismissal, by vote of the Executive Committee, from the editorship of the Standard. My answer to that letter was mailed yesterday, and will doubtless be open to the perusal of any member of the Executive Committee who may wish to see it. But I have something to say which I would not utter in an official note addressed to one who is known to me only or chiefly in his ^{public} ~~official~~ relations to the cause, and which my heart prompts

me to address to you, as one who has known me long and well, and therefore able to appreciate fully the circumstances in which I am placed.

A clap of thunder from an unclouded sky would not have astonished me more than did the announcement of that note of the Executive Committee. The cold official tone of the letter—so unlike what seemed to me due to an old and faithful servant of the Society, suddenly to be turned out of its employment at the beginning of winter—was well calculated to beget the suspicion that there were reasons for the act which the resolution does not disclose. The letter of Mr. Bowditch conveyed all the information that I possess of the action of the Committee. I know not what consultations preceded the act, by whom the resolution was introduced, how many

were present, nor whether it was adopted by a unanimous or a majority vote. But it is the act of the Committee, and while my self-respect forbids me to ask its reconsideration, a sense of justice prompts me to tell you, as a friend, just how I feel about it.

I concede, of course, the right of the Committee to discharge me, in common with all the rest of its servants, for good and sufficient reasons, of which, in the nature of things, it must judge for itself. But the manner in which the act has been done has wounded me to the quick. The Committee found me, now nearly five years since, at Philadelphia, in a position more eligible than any I had ever held before, and which bid fair to be permanent. They represented to

me and to the Pennsylvania Executive Committee the almost indispensable need of my services in New York, and urged me to accept the post of associate editor of the Standard. I speak the simple truth when I say, that I consented to leave Philadelphia with deep reluctance, and only because I was made to feel that the cause demanded a sacrifice of my personal preferences. I was sole editor of the Freeman; I came hither to share responsibility with another, under circumstances which led more than one of my friends to prophesy disaster and defeat. I was encouraged by the assurance that if Mr. Gay and myself could only harmonize in our labors, the situation would undoubtedly be mine as long as I might choose to remain in it.

Under these circumstances, with many misgivings as to my ability to perform the difficult ^{and delicate} duties assigned me, I left Philadelphia for New York. Of the manner in which I have discharged those duties for now nearly five years, it does not become me to speak; but I may at least say that if I have given any occasion for any dissatisfaction on the part of the Society or the Committee, no intimation of the fact has ever reached me. If the Committee are entirely satisfied with me as an editor of the Standard, then I must acknowledge my astonishment that they could so readily pass a vote to dismiss me, and that they could send it to me in a shape which they must have known, if they had reflected at all upon the subject, could not fail to wound me deeply.

The commercial panic and the consequent poverty of the Society is assigned as the sole reason for this step. I am willing to give due weight to this consideration; but I insist that some respect was due to the judgment and the feelings of both Mr. Gay and myself in this matter. We were at least entitled to be consulted before the first step was taken. Mr. Gay is a member of the Executive Committee, and it is not too much to say that, on account of his long connection with the Standard, he is peculiarly qualified to form a judgment as to the effects of such a movement upon the cause, and to enlighten his associates in respect to whatever concerns the administration of the Society's affairs in New York. Placed here, as we are, in a peculiarly trying

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and responsible position, I think it was
neither kind nor respectful to us to
adopt such a resolve without consult-
ing us. Why could not the Committee,
before deciding upon a measure so
deeply affecting us, give us some in-
dication of the strait in which they
found themselves, and ask one or
both of us to come to Boston and
consider with them what should
be done? Did not our relations
to the Society and the cause entitle
us to this degree of respect and
confidence?

I do not think I am wanting in
magnanimity, or so selfishly devoted to
my own interests as to be incapable of
appreciating the embarrassments of the
Committee; and I cannot help think
it was unkind and even cruel to turn

off an old soldier in this way, at the beginning of winter, when there is little ground for hope that he can find employment elsewhere. If I had dreamed that the Committee would ever treat me thus, I certainly should not have ~~consented~~^{yielded} to the importunities by which I was pressed into their service and induced to resign the editorship of the Pennsylvania Freeman.

It seems strange to me, moreover, that the Committee, while resolving to discharge me from the office, should yet tax the treasury for stories for that page of the paper which they must all acknowledge was before entirely satisfactory to its readers and scarcely needed change or improvement.

I have expressed my sentiments to you with entire freedom, but with no expectation of reversing the action of the Committee - still less with any desire to excite sympathy. Though my prospects are dark, I shall meet the crisis with fortitude. God forbid that any personal interest of mine should ever stand in the way of the cause. I have little reason to expect to find employment this winter, but hope to find some place in the country where the work of my hands will be accepted as a compensation for my board. Mary Anne is not well enough to resume lec-

turning, but may feel herself
compelled to do so notwithstanding.
Whatever may betide, ~~never~~
~~never~~ my dear Garrison, in the
love of the cause I have so long
and so joyfully served, I
remain, Yours, faithfully,

Oliver Johnson

O.J. n.d. - Nov. 28, 1857.